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McFarlane assured Hill North wasn't breaking law

By Lance Gay
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Former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane conducted a "thorough investigation" of White House aide Lt. Col. Oliver North's links to the Contras more than a year ago and concluded Col. North wasn't breaking any law.

But congressional investigators say they now know that Col. North directed Contra supply operations for at least the last two years until he was fired from his National Security Council job Nov. 25 when his secret Contra supply operation was discovered.

Investigators believe Col. North coordinated these activities with retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard Secord, an international arms dealer, who has been called to testify before the House Intelligence Committee tomorrow.

Mr. McFarlane conducted an investigation of Col. North's activities last year at the request of members of Congress. News stories at the time linked Col. North to private pro-Contra fund-raisers and said the aide also was coordinating Contra

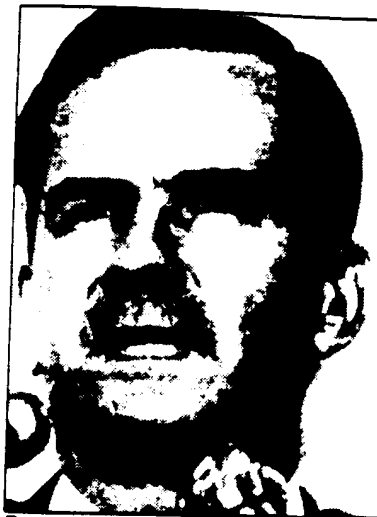
fighting by providing the rebels with military advice.

But Mr. McFarlane testified before both the House and Senate Intelligence Committees in closed-door meetings in September 1985 that a "thorough investigation" showed Col. North wasn't soliciting funds for Contra rebels or violating a congressional ban on aiding the insurgents.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Rep. Lee Hamilton, Indiana Democrat, says Mr. McFarlane assured the committee last year that Col. North hadn't "given any military advice of any kind to the Contras or solicited, accepted, transmitted or in any other way been involved with funds for the Contras."

Mr. McFarlane is reported to have told the committee he had quizzed Col. North about the news stories and Col. North had denied any involvement with the Contras.

Mr. McFarlane assured the House and Senate committees that President Reagan ordered the White House staff to comply with the law then in effect barring any U.S. government agency from helping the rebels. He is reported to have also told the panel he personally ordered



Robert McFarlane

his NSC staffers not to solicit aid for the Contras through private groups to get around a congressional ban on direct U.S. government aid.

Congressional investigators say Mr. McFarlane, who left his NSC post in December 1985, told the Senate Intelligence Committee in two hearings this month that he knew nothing about Col. North's secret Contra funding activities and was surprised when they were unearthed by Attorney General Edwin Meese's investigation of the NSC last month.